

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANKARA 01660 060952Z
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AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 1660

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, TU
SUBJECT: STATUS OF GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE

1. DURING WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION MARCH 2, REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) DEPSEC GEN, SENATOR UGUR ALACAKAPTAN TOLD EMBOFFS THAT ECEVIT GOVERNMENT WOULD BE TAKING STEPS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN TURKEY. HE SUGGESTED THAT THESE MEASURES SHOULD FIND FAVOR WITHIN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND IMPROVE US-TURKISH RELATIONS. (COMMENT: ALACAKAPTAN APPARENTLY HAS IN MIND, INTER ALIA, THE REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS ON COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA AND ACTIVITIES AS PROVIDED FOR IN ARTICLES 141 AND 142 OF THE CRIMINAL CODE.

2. EMBOFF COUNTERED BY SAYING THAT ANY IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WOULD OF COURSE BE CONSIDERED POSITIVE STEP BY USG. HE THEN SUGGESTED THAT THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT MAKE AN EFFORT TO ELIMINATE AREAS OF
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PAGE 02 ANKARA 01660 060952Z

DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOT AND THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE IN ISTANBUL. EMBOFF SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE QUESTION OF TRAVEL AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS ON A SMALL MINORITY MIGHT NOT SEEM AS IMPORTANT FROM THE TURKISH POINT OF VIEW AS AN EXPANSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL TURKISH CITIZENS, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF WORLD PUBLIC OPINION IT WOULD BE QUITE IMPORTANT. HE POINTED OUT THAT EVEN MINOR INFRINGEMENTS OF THE RIGHTS

OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY IN ISTANBUL HAD REPERCUSSIONS
IN THE US AND AFFECTED THE ABILITY OF THE USG TO DEVELOP A
POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOT. ALACAKAPTAN DID NOT
RESPOND DIRECTLY.

3. COMMENT: AS A FORMER DEAN OF THE ANKARA UNIVERSITY LAW
FACULTY, ALACAKAPTAN WAS IMPRISONED IN THE EARLY 1970'S
FOR DEFENDING LEFTISTS CHARGED DURING THE MARTIAL LAW PERIOD.
HE IS ONE OF TURKEY'S LEADING ADVOCATES OF EXPANDED CIVIL
RIGHTS. WHILE HE DOES NOT HAVE POLICY-MAKING RESPONSIBILITIES
WITHIN THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT, ALACAKAPTAN IS HIGHLY REGARDED
WITHIN THE PARTY AND COULD HAVE SOME IMPACT ON GOT POLICIES
IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AREAM AS SIMILAR OPPORTUNITIES ARISE
IN THE FUTURE, WE INTEND TO ENCOURAGE OTHER TURKISH LEADERS
TO TAKE A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH TO THEIR RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE PATRIARCHAGE.
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